

Running head: DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR WAKE FOREST

How Can Wake Forest Fire Department Develop and Maintain a Strategic Plan?

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Appendix C Not Included. Please visit the Learning Resource Center on the Web at <http://www.lrc.dhs.gov/> to learn how to obtain this report in its entirety through Interlibrary Loan.

Certification Statement

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and the appropriate credit given where I used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another.

Signed: _____

Abstract

Wake Forest Fire Department Inc. has been an incorporated private nonprofit organization since 1983. The problem was that despite the amount of years that this organization has been around, the Wake Forest Fire Department (WFFD) did not have a Strategic Plan and no one knew how to create one.

The purpose of this research was to develop a strategic plan for the WFFD and to provide the staff with guidance for future revisions of the plan. Action research was used to evaluate available material relative to strategic plans and how to develop strategic plans, as well as surveying current department personnel in order to determine which direction the department needs to head, and finally with assistance from several work groups develop a strategic plan. These items were used to answer the following questions:

1. Why do we need a strategic plan?
2. How do we create a strategic plan?
3. What should be included in Wake Forest Fire Department's strategic plan?
4. When do we revise the strategic plan?
5. Once the strategic plan is completed, is there another document needed for future planning?

Procedures included literature research, committee development, surveys, and the development of a strategic plan. Results of all the research led the researcher to develop a strategic plan that was designed specifically for WFFD, strategic plans are needed to further the organization, using existing models a new one was created, and a list of procedures were found that would be included in the plan. Further recommendations for WFFD was to review the plan

annually, completely update the plan every five years and begin the process of accreditation, develop an operational plan, hazard risk analysis and a standard of coverage.

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Introduction

It is apparent to anyone that is involved in the fire service that this profession has changed over the years. You hear the same story, from a firefighter who just got off of probation to a forty year veteran of the fire service. The only difference between the two is the amount of years they put at the end of the statement “Why are we changing that, we didn’t do it like thatyears ago!” Change is going to happen, period. It’s how you adapt and control how the change affects your organization that is going to make your organization a success or failure.

Wake Forest Fire Department Inc. has been an incorporated private nonprofit organization since 1983. The problem is that despite the amount of years that this organization has been around, the Wake Forest Fire Department (WFFD) does not have a Strategic Plan and no one knows how to create one.

The purpose of this research was to develop a strategic plan for the WFFD and to provide the staff with guidance for future revisions of the plan. Action research was used to evaluate available material relative to strategic plans and how to develop strategic plans, as well as surveying current department personnel in order to determine which direction the department needs to head, and finally with assistance from several work groups develop a strategic plan. These items were used to answer the following questions:

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This author, having accepted the Administrative Deputy Chief position a little over a year ago, chose to develop this strategic plan in order to provide a direction for WFFD and to meet one of the USFA operational objectives to respond appropriately in a timely manner to emerging issues.

Developing this strategic plan will create a working document that will keep us fully focused on routine matters that require continuous attention, as well as position the organization to effectively plan, manage, and meet the demands of a modern Fire Department.

The strategic plan will not be able to answer every question, solve all of the problems, address every issue, or resolve every conflict. But it will give the department a template and direction on how to provide a timely response to any emergency. It is also designed to be a living document that will be measured and updated on an annual basis.

Background and Significance

In 1915, a request for assistance was made to the Raleigh Fire Department from the citizens of Wake Forest College. They reported that the Wake Forest Machinery and Hardware Company had a fire on the second floor of the building. Engine Company #1 from the Raleigh Fire Department was summoned and the Raleigh firefighting crew begins the 17-mile response. Hauling 3000 gallons of water in a driving rainstorm, the Raleigh fire crew arrives some 35 minutes later. Within approximately five minutes after the fire crew's arrival, the 3000-gallon tank is emptied. Despite the valiant efforts of the Raleigh fire crew and the Town of Wake Forest's bucket brigade, the building burns to the ground. Hence, in 1922, the Town of Wake Forest's fire protection service was founded. The first fire truck was an old Westcott automobile and converted by firefighters into a combination chemical and hose wagon. The top was cut off

of the car, a bed was constructed for hose, a basket was installed to hold chemical tanks, and provisions were made for carrying ladders.

Since the Town of Wake Forest Fire Department would not respond to fires in the rural areas surrounding the Town, a group of citizens met at Town Hall to organize a rural fire department. In 1955 a new fire district that would encompass all of the area surrounding the Town was created and was named the Wakette Fire Protection District. In 1956, the rural fire department was incorporated as Wake Forest Rural Fire Department, Inc. That same year, the first fire truck for the rural department was a 1942 Chevy 1 1/2 ton pumper purchased as Civil Defense surplus for \$100.

In 1981 firefighters and Town officials agree to a proposal to combine fire departments. The department would be governed by a board of directors with equal representation from both rural and Town areas. Both areas will contribute to the fire budget based on their proportional shares of the tax base. Benefits from the proposed merger include the ability of the merged department to fight fires from the Franklin County line to the Neuse River and to have greater water availability with quick-dump tankers, in lieu of the Town's poor water pressure.

In 1983, Town and rural fire departments merge. Wake Forest and Wakette fire districts are merged. Wake Forest Fire Department Incorporated is chartered. The Town became first municipality in state to contract fire protection to another agency. The contract price was \$0.05 cents per \$100 valuation and the department received \$24,000 for 1983-84 fiscal year.

Today, the Wake Forest Fire Department is still a private nonprofit organization and is a progressively minded combination fire department serving the Town of Wake Forest and the surrounding unincorporated Wakette Rural district. We provide fire protection, emergency medical and rescue services, as well as an enthusiastic and dynamic public education program

for the community. The Fire Chief answers to a nine member Board of Directors and our budget has increased to almost four million dollars. We operate currently out of three stations with three Engines and one Ladder company. We have 50 paid personnel 24/7, and 28 volunteers supplementing the paid staff in answering approximately 2200 incidents, including mutual aid calls, 66% of which are emergency medical related. Our response area is a mix of residential, commercial and rural/agricultural. There are 16 schools in our area, both private and public, as well as Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, (the former Wake Forest College), which has a current enrollment of over 2300 students.

The Town of Wake Forest is located in the most northern part of Wake County, North Carolina. The Wake Forest Fire District encompasses a total area of 44 square miles with a population of approximately 40,000 people, which includes the Town and outside-the-city limit rural areas. Historically the Town was active in small family owned businesses, farmland and some factory industry. However, in very recent years, a large number of commercial businesses have come to Wake Forest. This increase in business has brought about unprecedented growth to our area. Wake Forest is no longer the “small town” it was becoming an ever-sprawling suburban city. Further, the sale of numerous acres of prior farmlands and privately owned land, is contributing to this dramatic growth.

According to U.S. Census Bureau statistics in 1990, Wake Forest’s population, within the city limits only was 5769 persons. Today, 20 years later, our overall population both within and outside the city limits has grown to approximately 40,000 people. To further illustrate this dramatic increase, in August of 2007, the Town of Wake Forest was named one of the fastest growing suburbs in the country by *Forbes Magazine*. According to *Forbes*, Wake Forest saw a 73.2 percent growth in population between 2000 and 2006, ranking No. 20 on their list. Despite

our nation's financial crisis, we are still witnessing increasing residential and commercial growth.

This applied research project was undertaken to determine why do we need a strategic plan, how do we create it, what should be included in Wake Forest Fire Department's strategic plan, when do we revise the strategic plan, and once it is completed, what other documents are needed for future planning? This research project is relates to and supports one of the U.S. Fire Administrations (USFA) operational objectives, which is to respond appropriately and in a timely manner to emerging issues (U.S. Fire Administration, 2001, p. II-2) The results of this research and project will create a viable Strategic Plan for Wake Forest Fire Department and will be utilized as a tool to guide the department's future.

The WFFD Fire Chief has expressed his interest in achieving accreditation through the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI). Completing the strategic plan will help in achieving that goal. The CFAI manual (Fire and Emergency Service Self Assessment Manual) was purchased a year ago so that the organization can begin the process without having to register. After reviewing the manual we realized that our organization lacked a lot of documents including a strategic plan. The Fire and Emergency Service Self Assessment Manual (CFAI, 2006) further explains how their accreditation is tied to strategic planning:

There is a strategic or other form of long-term planning (3-5 years in the future) that, along with the budget, is guiding the activities of the agency. The plan has been submitted to the appropriate authority having jurisdiction.

Since WFFD is a private organization that is governed by a Board of Directors (BOD), the strategic plan will be submitted to the BOD for approval.

Literature Review

Buckman (2006) states that there is a difference between strategic plans and operational plans. Strategic plans apply to the department as a whole. It establishes the organization's overall goals and strategies and positions the department to achieve certain objectives. Operational plans are expressed in more details and address day-to-day activities of the department. Strategic plans are vision driven while operational plans are mission driven.

Accreditation has become more of a goal for the fire service in recent years. Accreditation is one of the most meaningful controls for a fire department. It forces a fire department to ask itself the tough questions and make appropriate adjustments to improve its quality and performance (Buckman, 2006)

Buckman (2006) also recommends that the Fire Chief should organize a strategic planning team to evaluate and make strategic recommendations for service improvements. Part of strategic planning includes creating a mission statement, vision statement, goals, and tactics. Buckman (2006) describes eight steps in a well managed planning process and it includes:

1. Define vision, core values, and mission.
2. Analyze strengths.
3. Analyze weaknesses.
4. Identify opportunities.
5. Identify threats.
6. Set goals and objectives.
7. Develop tactical and operational plans.
8. Monitor budgets.

For a strategic plan to be effective, it must have commitment and support from the fire chief, department, and Board of Directors (Stowall, 2004, P.291). Stowall describes the strategic planning process as a six step program. The first step is developing the strategic plan, including creating the mission statement, establishing goals and objectives, identifying strategic alternatives, and formulating a strategy. His second step is to implement the plan. The chief officers leading the company officers and employees should use the strategic plan to create operational plans. Third step is to monitor the strategic plan by establishing measurements against which to judge the effectiveness of the plan. The forth step is to evaluate the plan to determine its effectiveness by comparing the actual results with the standards established. The fifth step is to publish an annual report which gives an update on the progress of the strategic plan to see if it is on target with the established goals and objectives. The last step in his process is to revise the plan only under two conditions, (1) annually to maintain a consistent life cycle (2) when there is a critical change in the operating environment (2004).

Compton (2002) states that the strategic plan is the road map for the future. The plan must be reflected in the department's budget, few goals are achieved without money. The budget and strategic plan must be synchronized with each other. Compton (2002) further states that the fire chief is ultimately responsible for initialing and facilitation the strategic planning process and that regardless of the size of the organization you must have input from both internal and external stakeholders. He describes each step of the SWOT analysis and that there should be a committee or group responsible for each component. Once the SWOT analysis is complete that a goals and objectives committee convenes to establish and prioritize the strategic goals and objectives with timelines.

Brady and Duncan (2000) provide some common sense when it involves running an organization. They state that a business is not static; it will change with the environment around it. If a business does not change with the times then it will not survive. A business, that includes any fire and rescue service, must work to develop a planning team and a planning document to meet the organizational needs of the future. The team should include various personnel that would cover the whole spectrum of employees including the CEO or highest level executive.

Brady and Duncan (2000) suggest that the first three steps that need to be accomplished are to gather data from external stakeholders, internal stakeholders, and review the organizational capabilities and competencies. The next step that they suggest is to gather and review the organizational product and market assumptions. In other words, look at what we offer to the public and how well are we doing. The next step would be to address those threats or weaknesses that may cause harm to the organization. The next step would be to create strategies to that would give the organization a direction. After the strategies were compiled then the organization needs to develop action plans, budgets, and schedules to keep the plan on target.

In Wallace's (2006) book *Fire Department Strategic Planning*, he evaluated many references on strategic planning and formulated a reference for fire departments to use to develop a strategic plan. Wallace (2006) states that the planning team should develop the plan looking into the future up to five years to identify actions that can be taken to achieve the strategic goals. In his book he suggests that for every strategic statement there should be a strategic goal, objective, and action items that would move the organization closer to achieving its future that is stated in the vision statement. Wallace (2006) states that "your strategic plans should drive your operational plans", and he goes further by saying that the best strategic plans are always in revision.

Wallace (2006) lays out what a strategic plans table of contents should contain:

1. Title page
2. Table of Contents
3. Executive Summary
4. Core Values Explanation
5. Summary of Mandates
6. Department Mission Statement
7. Philosophy of Operations
8. Vision of the Department's Ideal Future
9. Environmental Assessment Summary
10. Strategic Goals

Bryson (2004) states that any strategic plan should address four fundamental questions; where are we going, how do we get there, what is our blueprint for action, and how do we know if we are on track? The strategic planning committee should conduct an internal and external stakeholder's analysis. Attention to stakeholders is critical because the key to success in any organization is the satisfaction of key stakeholders (Bryson, 2004).

The strategic planning committee must identify and address any issue facing the organization and figure out a way to manage each of the issues. When practical, strategic issues must be dealt with as quickly as possible both efficiently and effectively if the organization is to survive and grow. If the organization does not react quickly and effectively enough to an issue then some undesirable effects may occur or there may be some missed opportunities (Bryson, 2004)

The Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) (2006) points out some pitfalls in strategic planning. The ten most important pitfalls to avoid:

1. Top management's assumption that it can delegate the planning function to a planner.
2. Top management becomes so engrossed in current problems that it spends insufficient time on long-range planning and the process becomes discredited among managers and staff.
3. Failure to develop organizational goals suitable to provide a basis for formulating long-range plans.
4. Failure to assure the necessary involvement in the planning process of key line personnel.
5. Failure to use plans as standards for measuring managerial performance.
6. Failure to create a climate in the organization which is congenial and not resistant to change.
7. Assuming that organizational comprehensive planning is separate from the entire management process.
8. Injecting so much formality into the system that it lacks flexibility, looseness, simplicity and restrains creativity.
9. Failure of top management to review, with department and division heads, the long-range plans which they have developed.
10. Top Management consistently rejecting the formal planning mechanism by making intuitive decisions that conflict with the formal plans.

CFAI (2006) states that the key to success in strategic planning is to think strategically and that strategic planning is the road map that is drawn out that will help guide the organization to a predetermined destination.

National Fire Protection Association 1201, Providing Emergency Services to the Public (NFPA, 2007) is a nationally recognized standard for the fire service. The standard addresses master planning. It states that a master plan shall be created to coordinate the vision, mission, values, and goals of the Emergency Services Organization (ESO). The ESO shall include a master plan for a cost-effective hazard management strategy that takes into consideration existing conditions and anticipates overall community growth. The plan shall include a continuing program of research and planning that all aspects of the organization. The master plan shall be directed toward improving and maintaining the effectiveness and efficiency of ESOs and toward maintaining a responsive approach to the community's changing needs for service. Research and planning within each organization shall include maintaining ongoing relationships with other agencies involved in planning for the service area.

Procedures

This applied research project began with literature review at the National Fire Academy's Learning Resource Center (LRC). Several Applied Research Projects (ARP) were reviewed to see if other organizations had experienced the same issues as WFFD. Multiple manuals, texts, and journal articles were reviewed and a list was established so that WFFD's library could be updated to have the same information that assists us with developing and enhancing our future plans. Wake Forest Fire Department's library was also utilized to gather more information along with any previous data that had been compiled through previous administrations. Surveys were given out to internal stakeholders and the information was compiled and utilized in focus groups that would help put a strategic plan together.

In order to produce a successful strategic plan and answer the research questions, a 7 step process was used. The first step of the process was to get the research done in order to find out what steps would be needed to complete a strategic plan. Once the strategic plan was completed the answers to the research questions would follow. When the research was completed an outline of steps was created to complete a strategic plan.

The second step was to get approval from the Fire Chief and Board of Directors (BOD) to complete a strategic plan. A meeting was set up with the Fire Chief and all of the chief officers to go over the need for a strategic plan and what roles each chief officer would have in the process. At the next BOD meeting a proposal was introduced to the directors regarding the chief officers pursuing the production of a strategic plan and since our objective was to improve the future of the WFFD approval was given to pursue accreditation.

The third step was to determine the best way to get all of the employees input into the process. A SWOT analysis form was created based on four simple questions. What are WFFD's strengths, weaknesses and what are WFFD opportunities and threats. The forms were handed out during a special meeting that brought all of the paid employees together. Everyone was told that these forms were needed in order to come up with the department's goals and objectives. No names were needed on the forms and they were told that they would be anonymous so that they could be honest with their answers and not be concerned with any possible reactions from the chief officers. Because our organization is a combination fire department, I needed to get both paid and volunteer feedback. The next business meeting that the volunteers had, we passed on the same information to them and the forms were handed out.

In order to make sure that the research could achieve a 95 percent confidence level with my survey, a sampling chart (NFA, 2005, p. 38) was utilized to determine how many surveys

were needed to get back to achieve that level of confidence. For the paid group all of the employees minus the chiefs, and office employees were counted. These employees were excluded because they are not in a position to be considered a field employee. The total number of employees or “population size” was 45 (NFA, 2005, p.38), therefore my sample size was 40 surveys that were needed to be returned. The on duty company officers were utilized to collect the surveys from the specific group of employees that were not excluded. They were told to ensure the anonymity of the respondents and to pick up the finished surveys if the respondents wanted them to do so. Any other finished surveys could be channeled to my office through the interdepartmental mail. Forty surveys were turned back in, which met my sampling goal. We were able to ensure the 95 percent confidence level that was needed. The responses were entered into an Excel spreadsheet.

For the volunteer side of the department, in order to achieve a 95 percent confidence level with my survey, a sampling chart (NFA, 2005, p. 38) was utilized to determine how many surveys were needed to get back to achieve that level of confidence. For the volunteer group all of them were counted. The total number of volunteers or “population size” was 28 (NFA, 2005, p.38), therefore the sample size was 25 surveys that were needed to be returned. The surveys were passed out to them at their monthly meeting and each volunteer was able to receive one. All of the finished surveys could be dropped off in my mail box outside my office door. Four surveys were returned back, which did not meet my sampling goal. The 95 percent confidence level that was needed was not achieved. The responses were entered into an Excel spreadsheet.

The forth step was to develop the department's slogan, mission statement, vision statement and core values. Three separate groups of employees were given the task of creating each component and all three were asked to come up with a department slogan that would be

professional enough to be displayed on the sides of all of the apparatus. All three groups had relatively the same number of employees and had the same amount of officers. The groups consisted of four captains, four lieutenants (drivers), eight firefighters and at least one chief officer. The amount of years of service for each employee was unknown and random.

The first group tackled the mission statement since we needed to know what we stood for today. According to Wallace (2006, p.112) the mission statement should clearly reflect the major services that the department provides. One of the first steps in the process should include the identification of organizational values and the development of a mission statement (Bryson, 2004). An effective mission statement must contain three components; what functions does the fire department perform, who are those functions are performed for, and how does the department go about performing those functions (Wallace, 2006). The WFFD already had a mission statement but no one knew where it came from or what it stood for. The group took the current mission statement and reworded it to something that they felt ownership in.

The second group wanted to take on the vision statement because they wanted to have some input on what the future of WFFD would look like. According to Buckman (2006, p. 30) an organization's vision is the mental image of where its planning and implementation should take it. The group used the mission statement that the previous group created and formed a vision statement that the entire group voted on unanimously.

The third group was given the task of coming up with WFFD's values. Buckman (2006, p.29) describes values as characteristics that the members want to describe themselves and the ideals they uphold as a group. The group ran into an issue because they came up with 23 different value words that they thought described the department and the members. A suggestion came from the floor that instead of having values, they should come up with core values. The

core values would be a more defined group of words that would cover the most important characteristics. There were no set number of core values to that they had to come up with, the group just discussed the 23 values and were able to come up with seven that they felt were the best.

The only piece that was missing was the department slogan or what some people may call the mantra or motto. The next shift meeting that came around the groups came up with several different ideas but what stood more than any came from a previous chief that passed away years ago. Outside in the yard was a monument with a saying that the chief had used all the time, "saving lives, our prime goal", this was agreed on as the departments slogan.

The fifth step in the process involved creating a strategic goals committee, which was composed of three representatives from each rank. The committee met with one objective, take all of the SWOT analysis from the paid and volunteers and using the new mission statement, vision statement, core values and come up with the departments Strategic Goals. After several meeting they committee was able to come with nine main strategic goals. Using the same group and the same information, the committee was charged with coming up with objectives to meet the strategic goals and action items that would accomplish each objective.

The goals and objectives should now become the focus of the efforts of the Wake Forest Fire Department. Care was taken by the committee to ensure that the critical needs and areas of needed improvements previously identified were addressed within the goals and objectives. By following these goals and objectives carefully, the organization can be directed into their desired future. These established goals and objectives should also greatly reduce the number of obstacles and distractions for the organization and its members.

The sixth step in the process was to present a rough draft copy of the strategic plan to every company officer in the organization. They were charged with taking the strategic plan back to their company and review the plan with their employees. They were to make comments on the rough draft, whether it was an addition or a deletion to the plan. What was needed to make the strategic plan a success was buy-in by all of the employees. The officers were given two weeks to complete the review and to get it back to the chief.

The seventh step in the process was to have the Fire Chief review the entire document and provide an executive summary that would go at the beginning of the plan and to have the Board of Directors review and approve the plan.

Limitations

The research had limitations because the SWOT analysis form (Appendix A) that was distributed was only given to employees and volunteers, no chief officers were included in the survey. There were no external stakeholders involved in creating the plan because of time limitations set on this project. Even though the 95 percent confidence level was met, the goal that was initially set was 100 percent involvement. The remaining 5 percent could not be accounted for because the survey was anonymous. The time constraints set on the project also limited the depth of the strategic plan and project.

Definitions

Accreditation - A process by which an association or agency evaluates and recognizes a program of study or an institution as meeting certain predetermined standards or qualifications. It applies only to institutions or agencies and their programs of study or their services. Accreditation ensures a basic level of quality in the services received from an agency.

Master Planning - A combination of the organization's strategic plan and its operational plans.

Master plans take the various plans and integrate them into one document. Master plans help define the anticipated future of the community's demographics and how the community is expected to develop or change in the timeframe covered by the master plan.

Mission - An enduring statement of purpose, the organization's reason for existence. Describes what the organization does, for whom it does it, and how it does it.

Stakeholder - Any person, group, or organization that can place a claim on, or influence, the organization's resources or outputs, is affected by those outputs, or has an interest in or expectation of the organization.

Strategic Goal - A broad target that defines how the agency will carry out its mission over a specific period of time. An aim, the final result of action. Something to accomplish in assisting the agency to move forward.

Strategic Objective - A specific, measurable accomplishment required to realize the successful completion of a strategic goal.

Strategic Plan - A long-range planning document that defines the mission of the agency and broadly identifies how it will be accomplished, and that provide the framework for more detailed annual and operational plans.

Vision - An idealized view of a desirable and potentially achievable future state - where or what an organization would like to be in the future.

Results

The results of the applied research project have been compiled from extensive literature research, surveys, and committee groups. The following results are provided to answer each of the five questions.

Research question 1. Why do we need a strategic plan? A Strategic Plan is needed so that we gain a clear understanding of what programs and services the citizens want; and establish mission and vision statements for Wake Forest Fire Department (WFFD) that will meet the citizen's needs. The mission statement would define the department's purpose and core functions. It would also define the department's intentions towards serving its citizens. The vision statement would define what WFFD wants to look like in the future and how it will function in order to achieve its mission. The Strategic Plan will put into place a roadmap strategy for addressing those citizen needs and thereby meeting the mission of WFFD and reaching the vision of what we want to be in the future. A Strategic Plan can help our employees think, learn and act strategically through dialogue and strategic conversations. A good strategic planning process can lay an important foundation for addressing complex challenges by moving towards agreement on the department's mission/purpose, stakeholders' needs, core values, initial vision ideas of what success looks like, key issues and an initial strategy framework.

Research Question 2. How do we create a strategic plan? In order to produce a successful strategic plan and answer the research questions, a 7 step process was used. The first step of the process was to get the research done in order to find out what steps would be needed to complete a strategic plan. When the research was completed an outline of steps was created to complete a strategic plan.

The second step was to get approval from the Fire Chief and Board of Directors (BOD) to complete a strategic plan.

The third step was to determine the best way to get all of the employees input into the process. A SWOT analysis form was created based on four simple questions. What are WFFD's strengths, weaknesses and what are WFFD opportunities and threats.

The forth step was to develop the department's slogan, mission statement, vision statement and core values. Three separate groups of employees were given the task of creating each component and all three were asked to come up with a department slogan that would be good enough to be written on the sides of all of the apparatus. All three groups had relatively the same number of employees and had the same amount of officers. The groups consisted of four captains, four lieutenants (drivers), eight firefighters and at least one chief officer. The amount of years of service for each employee was unknown and random.

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The fifth step in the process involved creating a strategic goals committee, which was composed of three representatives from each rank. The committee met with one objective, take all of the SWOT analysis from the paid and volunteers and using the new mission statement, vision statement, core values and come up with the departments Strategic Goals. After several meeting they committee was able to come with nine main strategic goals. Using the same group and the same information, the committee was charged with coming up with objectives to meet the strategic goals and action items that would accomplish each objective.

The goals and objectives should now become the focus of the efforts of the Wake Forest Fire Department. Care was taken by the committee to ensure that the critical needs and areas of needed improvements previously identified were addressed within the goals and objectives. By following these goals and objectives carefully, the organization can be directed into their desired future. These established goals and objectives should also greatly reduce the number of obstacles and distractions for the organization and its members.

The sixth step in the process was to present a rough draft copy of the strategic plan to every company officer in the organization. They were charged with taking the strategic plan back to their company and review the plan with their employees.

The seventh step in the process was to have the Fire Chief review the entire document and provide an executive summary that would go at the beginning of the plan and to have the Board of Directors review and approve the plan.

Research question 3. What should be included in Wake Forest Fire Department's strategic plan? During the research, several recommendations were made as far as what would go into a strategic plan. WFFD's plan for the future is to become an accredited department, so the CFAI's (2006) strategic plan outline was used as a guide with some modifications.

Research Question 4. When do we revise the strategic plan? Wright (2007) suggests that the Morrisville Fire Department will do an annual review and conduct a complete overhaul every four years. Wallace (2006) states that the planning team should develop the plan looking into the future up to five years to identify actions that can be taken to achieve the strategic goals. Stowall states that you should revise the plan only under two conditions, (1) annually to maintain a consistent life cycle (2) when there is a critical change in the operating environment (2004). Based on the research and the availability of time and resources needed to commit to a review of the strategic plan, WFFD will review annually and conduct an extensive restructuring every five years.

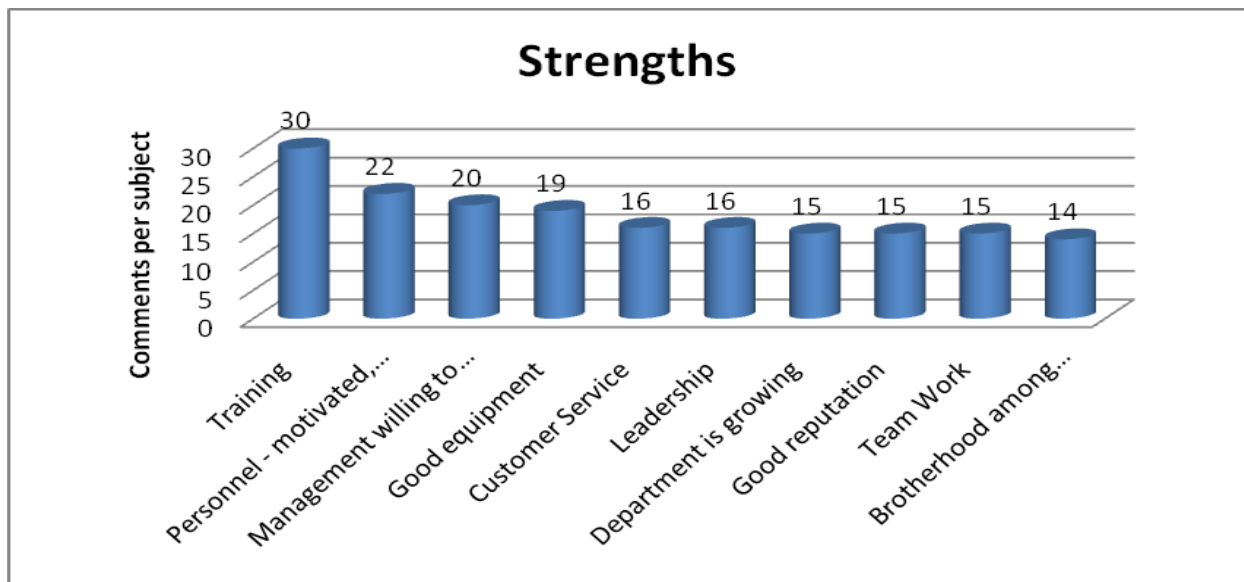
Research Question 5. Once the strategic plan is completed, is there another document needed for future planning? Buckman (2006) states that there is a difference between strategic plans and operational plans. Strategic plans apply to the department as a whole. It establishes the organization's overall goals and strategies and positions the department to achieve certain objectives. Operational plans are expressed in more details and address day-to-day activities of the department. Strategic plans are vision driven while operational plans are mission driven.

Wallace (2006) states that "your strategic plans should drive your operational plans", and he goes further by saying that the best strategic plans are always in revision.

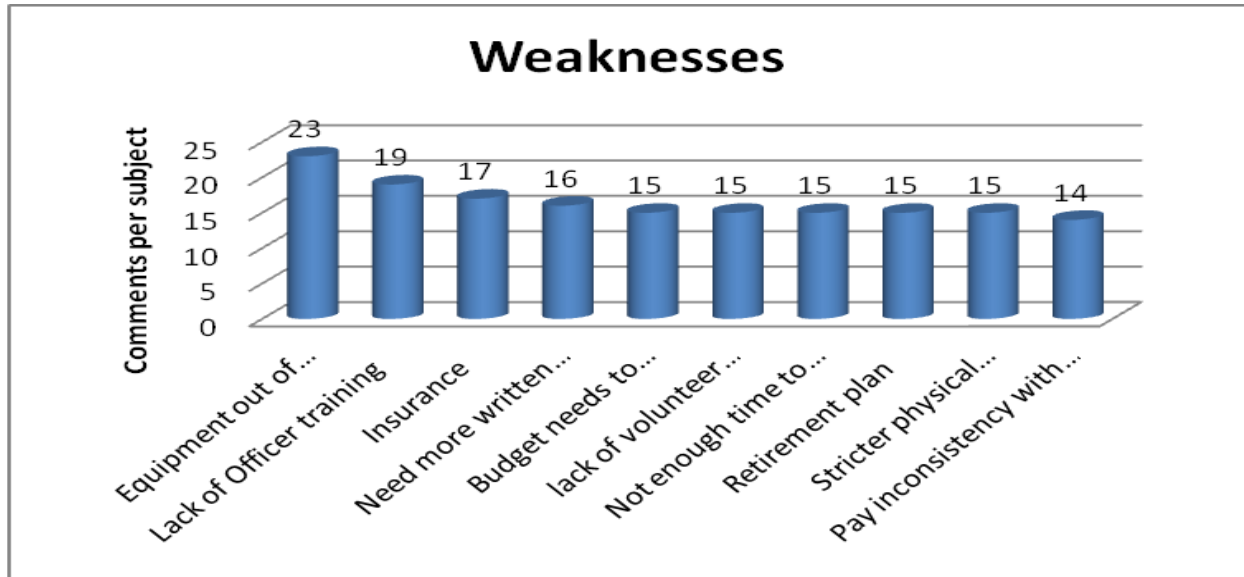
It is obvious that the strategic plan that was completed for WFFD is not an all inclusive plan for the future. WFFD's strategic plan addresses the top nine strategic goals needed to direct the department on the right path. What is needed next is an operational plan to lay out timelines to complete each goal. The operational plan will be separated into three parts; short-term (2-3 years) operational section, a mid-term (5-6 years) operational and a long term (10 years) operational section.

The results of the SWOT analysis were more extensive that the researcher planned for. Therefore, only the top ten topics of each category will be discussed in the section. The results of the SWOT analysis are in its entirety as Appendix B.

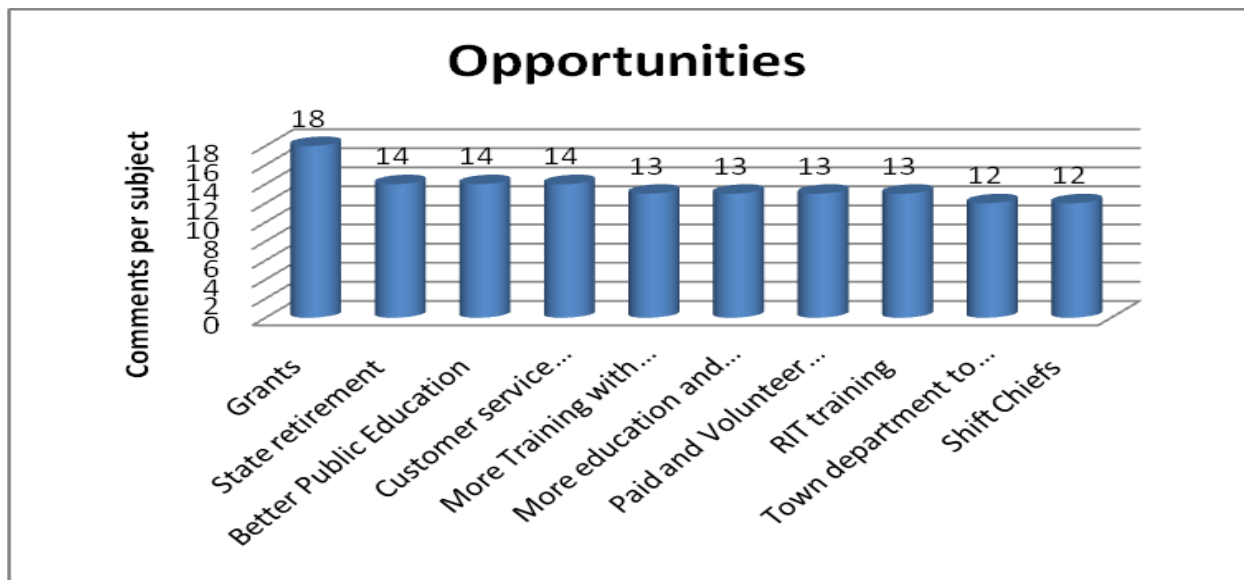
Graph 1



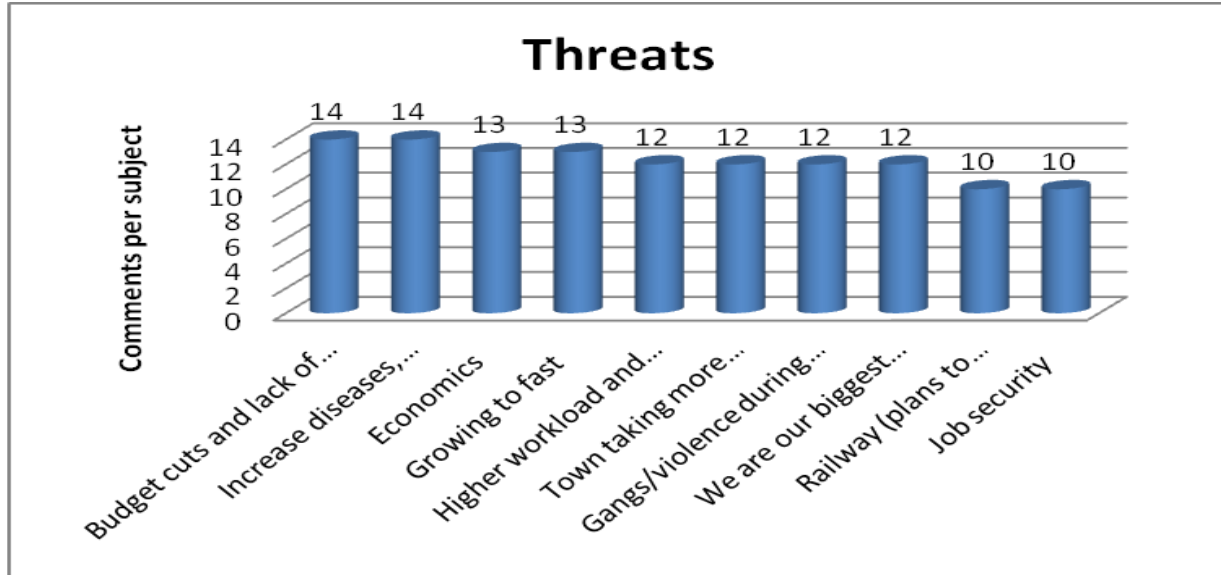
Graph 2



Graph 3



Graph 4



Discussions

The result of this research project clearly identifies the need for Wake Forest Fire Department (WFFD) to develop and implement a strategic plan. The researcher found that the only other planning document that was ever created for WFFD was a master plan and it was developed by the fire chief with no one else's input. The plan covered a ten year span and was destined to fail because he never involved the employees or the Town. His plan was over zealous and could have never come through in the time tables that were set or within the known budget.

The strategic planning process is important to the growth of any organization, especially in the fire service. Profit and nonprofit organizations have to be competitive in order to survive their market, they have to continuously improve their performance and develop a better service delivery for their product. The planning process for business is customer needs driven, we are no different. Wake Forest Fire Department (WFFD) is a private organization that is paid by the Town of Wake Forest and Wake County to provide the services needed by those governments.

At any time another private fire service could come in and offer a better service at a cheaper rate or the Town could create their own fire service and put us out of business.

Fire departments are strongly encouraged to look at the strengths so that they can build upon them and review their weaknesses and if possible eliminate them. In the emergency services world weaknesses could cause a loss of life unlike other businesses where their weaknesses could cause a loss in profits. One of the major challenges to the fire service is devoting time to strategic planning. We are historically accustomed to reacting to our environment, saving lives and property that are already in danger. Until fire prevention programs emerged, we were reactive verses being proactive. Even when we seen the difference that a good fire prevention program worked, we still spent more time reacting verses being proactive. Royer (2007) summed it up when he said, "The failure to plan will result in failure to grow. A failure to grow is a failing of the organization"

There were several different thoughts on what should be included in a strategic plan but there were also some consistent information. One of the first steps in the process should include the development of mission and vision statements along with determining values (Bryson, 2004). Wallace (2006) identified a twelve step process in what should be included in a strategic planning process while Buckman (2006) described an eight step process.

WFFD has many areas needing improvements including facilities, apparatus replacement, training, communications, leadership, and improving the organization as a whole. Using the SWOT analysis as part of the strategic planning gave the strategic plan as well as myself, methods and ways of developing and improving those needs.

Planning is a continuous process, one with no clear beginning and no clear end. While plans can be developed on a regular basis, it is the process of planning that is important, not the

publication of the plan itself. The planning process should be flexible and dynamic. New information from customers, other departments, and changes in the environment both internally and externally are to be factored into the planning process. The strategic plan should be an operationally useful document.

I decided to develop and implement a Strategic Plan by asking for and receiving input from the members of the department during the development stage of the planning process. I utilized professional guidance from other chiefs and literature to compile this written document. The success of the Wake Forest Fire Department Strategic Plan will not depend upon the implementation of the nine goals and their related objectives, but from the support received from the authority having jurisdiction, the membership of the agency and the community at-large. The Wake Forest Fire Department Strategic Plan creates a platform for a wide range of beginnings.

The researcher found that strategic planning has evolved over the years in both the fire service and in businesses. In a new competitive world that is driven by technology, faster service and a declining health care system; the public service are being held to an increasing higher standard. Because of this fire departments across the country must consider the need to develop a strategic plan. The bottom line of this research is that fire departments can better serve their community with the use of strategic planning (Wright, 2007)

Recommendations

Based on the initial problem that the Wake Forest Fire Department (WFFD) does not have a Strategic Plan and no one knows how to create one; I recommend that the Fire Chief and the Board of Directors adopt the Strategic Plan that the researcher completed for his ARP. Even before the plan is approved, components of the plan not needing funding can be implemented as

soon as possible that would improve the organization. Further recommendations from the researcher would be to involve the external stakeholders as soon as possible and include the information on the annual updated strategic plan. The approved strategic plan should be reviewed annually and completely restructured every five years. For the future, I recommend following Buckman's (2006) eight steps in a well managed planning process and it includes:

1. Define vision, core values, and mission.
2. Analyze strengths.
3. Analyze weaknesses.
4. Identify opportunities.
5. Identify threats.
6. Set goals and objectives.
7. Develop tactical and operational plans.
8. Monitor budgets.

Once the strategic plan is approved, WFFD should continue pursuing their accreditation status. As part of the accreditation process, WFFD will need to complete their short-term, mid-term, and long-term operational plans as well as completing a hazard risk analysis of their district and a standard of coverage.

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Appendix A

Strengths (Internal - What are our strengths, what makes us good at what we do?)

Weaknesses (Internal - What are our weaknesses, what problems do we have?)

Opportunities (External - What is out there that would help us, what will make us better?)

Threats (External - What is out there that could hurt us?)

Appendix B

Wake Forest Fire Department**Strengths**

Training
 Personnel - motivated, knowledgeable, aggressive
 Management willing to listen and change
 Good equipment
 Customer Service
 Leadership
 Department is growing
 Good reputation
 Team Work
 Brotherhood among staff members
 Staffing
 Communications
 Great Organization
 Management is trying to be better organized
 Morale
 Pride
 Types of apparatus
 Pay
 401k matching
 Amount of Chief Officers
 College reimbursement
 Free Insurance for the employee
 Monthly EMS training
 Moving in Right Direction
 Opportunities for career advancement
 Realization that improvement is needed
 Relationship with other Fire Departments
 Relationship with Town
 Searching for Grants
 Station security
 The experienced officers passing on knowledge
 Physical fitness programs
 Proactive
 Becoming an EMT department
 Policies
 Board of Directors willing to work with us
 Healthy personnel

Weaknesses

Equipment out of service too long, or not getting fixed
 Lack of Officer training
 Insurance
 Need more written communications
 Budget needs to support goals and objectives
 lack of volunteer participation
 Not enough time to focus on core duties, busy doing everything else
 Retirement plan
 Stricter physical training program
 Pay inconsistency with rank
 Chiefs leaving shift meetings
 Aging equipment
 Different rules for volunteers
 Finishing SOG rewrites
 Staffing for R1
 Volunteer Chiefs role
 Turnout gear issues
 no training facility
 All personnel should be able to do Incident reports
 Chiefs getting new equipment, crews are not
 Chiefs need to focus on their specific duties
 Differences in shifts work ethics
 Equipment and safety devices overlooked because of money
 Facility storage space
 IT support, email, computers, server
 Keeping staff on their assigned apparatus
 Poor system for ordering supplies
 Proper fitness facility and equipment
 Training programs needed by staff members
 Young department
 Chiefs not trusting Officers
 Not enough part-timers to cover open shifts
 Communications pagers
 Chiefs are not always right, listen to others
 No mentoring
 More public service programs, community involvement
 Unified CAD system
 Better toilet paper
 Bugs and spiders
 Chiefs informal playing
 Chiefs not following SOG's
 Daily staffing scheduling
 Different uniforms for chiefs and staff
 Intimidation from Supervisors and Chiefs
 Lack of encouragement for new certifications

Appendix B

Wake Forest Fire Department**Opportunities**

Grants
 State retirement
 Better Public Education
 Customer service programs
 More Training with Neighboring Fire Departments
 More education and degree programs, NFA, FDIC
 Paid and Volunteer function together
 RIT training
 Town department to get better retirement
 Shift Chiefs
 Town department to get better insurance
 Diversity training
 External education
 Hiring outside help to do maintenance (yard, vehicle...)
 Reimbursement for gym memberships
 Town department
 Timers for bay doors
 Merger with Falls
 Mobile CADS for apparatus
 Free Ice-cream Tuesday
 More professional uniforms
 Color schemes for apparatus, stations
 More growth, more employees
 Have more Police and Fire functions
 Officer training
 Rescue training
 Future plans
 Degree programs run through the stations
 Insurance after retirement
 Inspections handled through the fire department
 Degree programs reimbursements
 Grant assistance for degrees
 Follow up data on our fire prevention activities
 Let the staff get involved in department projects
 Install child safety seats
 Accreditation
 Growing population
 More staffing, companies, stations
 Engine/Ladder job guidelines
 Training for specific duties, pub ed, training, pre plans...
 Morale boosters, T-shirts, slogans

Threats

Budget cuts and lack of funding
 Increase diseases, more exposures
 Economics
 Growing to fast
 Higher workload and volume may create fatigue and sick usage
 Town taking more control
 Gangs/violence during incidents
 We are our biggest threat, behavior in the community
 Railway (plans to handle accidents)
 Job security
 If we become Town department, negative changes
 Bad publicity
 Taking on Ambulance service
 Lack of personnel and stations to keep up with growing community
 Economic crises creates more fires and medical calls
 Historic district is a higher target hazard
 Not keeping up with pre plans for old and new construction
 Negative personalities
 Jurisdiction issues with other fire departments
 Unsafe work conditions
 Town creating their own FD
 County cutting off funding for replacement apparatus
 Annexation of our district by other towns or cities
 WMD, Biohazard attacks
 Turn over
 Meth labs
 Breakdown of community relations
 Flu season